

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T BOGOTA 12309

EXDIS

FOR ASST. SEC. ROGERS

EO: 11652: XGDS-1  
TAGS: PFOR PINS MOPS CU AO CO  
SUBJ: CUBAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA

REF: STATE 300139

1. ON DECEMBER 18 AND 19 DURING SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS ON OTHER SUBJECTS WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND PRESIDENT LOPEZ, RESPECTIVELY, I TOOK THE OCCASION TO CALL ATTENTION TO THE CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA AND PROVIDED A BRIEF ORAL RESUME OF THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS. THEIR REACTION WAS AS FOLLOWS:

2. LIEVANO STATED THAT THE US MAY BE PUBLICLY OVER-EMPHASIZING THE CUBAN INTERVENTION AT THE EXPENSE OF THE SOVIET ROLE, WHICH HE THOUGHT MORE CENTRAL IN AT LEAST RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INTERVENTION. SINCE SOVIET INTERVENTION AFFECTED A GREAT MANY THINGS OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE--DETENTE, SALT, ETC.--THE US SHOULD FOCUS PUBLIC ATTENTION ON THAT ASPECT, IN THE UN AND ELSEWHERE. AS TO CUBA, HE WAS RELUCTANT TO ANALYZE VERY DEEPLY. HE ASCRIBED THE MAJOR REASON FOR CUBAN INTERVENTION AS THE BIDDING OF THE SOVIETS. HE SAID THAT HE OPPOSED RAISING THE ISSUE IN THE OAS FORUM (HE DID NOT, AS PER ABOVE, OBJECT TO THE OVERALL ISSUE OF INTERVENTION BEING RAISED IN THE UN); HE SAID NOTHING COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED THERE AND NO FORMAL ACTION OF THIS KIND WOULD BE FRUITFUL. UNSTATED, BUT I STRONGLY SUSPECT UNDERPINNING LIEVANO'S GENERAL APPROACH TO THIS QUESTION, IS A RELUCTANCE TO SEE CUBA REINTRO-

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DUCED AS AN ISSUE IN HEMISPHERE FORA; AS YOU KNOW, LIEVANO FELT

PERSONALLY INVOLVED IN WHAT HE TERMS "REMOVING THE ISSUE OF CUBA" (THE SANCTIONS QUESTION) FROM LA'S AGENDAS. HE WOULD NOT THEREFORE WANT TO SEE OLD WOUNDS REOPENED. FOR THAT REASON HE MUST BE CHAGRINED AT, AND IS CERTAINLY NOT SYMPATHETIC TO, THE CUBAN ACTION ITSELF.

3. IN MY CONVERSATION WITH HIM, PERSIDENT LOPEZ TALKED MORE OF WHY CUBA UNDERTOOK INTERVENTION. HE PUT THE FINGER ON THE SOVIETS AS MAKING IT POSSIBLE, BUT ALSO NOTED WITH WHAT ALACRITY CUBA EMBARKED ON THE ADVENTURE. UNDOUBTEDLY, HE SAID, IT DID SO BECAUSE IT FELT AND WAS PERSUADED BY THE SOVIETS TO BELIEVE A MAJOR ACHIEVEMENT WAS POSSIBLE WITH LITTLE RISK. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE THOUGHT IT IRONICAL THAT CUBA FELT IT IN THEIR INTEREST AND RELATIVELY RISKLESS TO SEND TROOPS TO AFRICA, WHILE THE MORE POWERFUL US, AT THE SAME DISTANCE FROM THE SCENE, THOUGHT IT TOO RISKY TO SEND EQUIPMENT. OUR CONVERSATION WAS MUCH SHORTER AND DID NOT FOCUS ON WHAT NATIONS MIGHT DO ABOUT THE SITUATION, BUT THE PRESIDENT WAS CLEARLY NOT THINKING ABOUT COLOMBIAN DOING (OR BEING ABLE TO DO) ANYTHING TO CAUSE THE SOVIETS/CUBANS TO CEASE AND DESIST, OR ANY HEMISPHERE INITIATIVE IN THAT SENSE.

4. IN BOTH CONVERSATIONS I SUGGESTED THAT THERE WERE TWO ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM--ONE WAS ANGOLA ITSELF AND ITS RELATION TO THE BROADER QUESTIONS OF DETENTE, ETC.; AND THE SECOND WAS THE FUTURE SIGNIFICANCE FOR LA OF THE INTERVENTIONIST INTENTIONS AND CAPABILITIES DEMONSTRATED IN THE ANGOLAN CASE. THE INTERVENTION BEING SO MASSIVE AND DEMONSTRATING A STRIKING CAPACITY TO PROJECT POWER OVER LONG DISTANCES WHEN ODDS WERE JUDGED FAVORABLE WAS PROBABLY A NEW ELEMENT IN THE PICTURE. THEY LISTENED BUT DID NOT VOLUNTEER MUCH, AND IN BOTH CASES WE AGREED TO TALK AGAIN ABOUT THESE ASPECTS LATER.

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